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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHAA/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 0813
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5873
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0854
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2764
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 4234
RUEHK/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0117
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3261
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1859
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 1036
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4729
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9760
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 001620

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR MOPS PTER AF PK IN

SUBJECT: KARZAI TELLS BOUCHER THAT AFGHANISTAN IS GROWING
MORE STABLE

NEW DELHI 00001620 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: A/PolCouns Joel Ehrendreich for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Meeting Afghan President Hamid Karzai April 3 on the sidelines of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit, Assistant Secretary Boucher noted that Pakistan had given Karzai a warm welcome into the organization. A Joint Jirga session last week was successful, said Karzai. Poppy eradication was on the rise in Helmand Province, but the police force needed to be strengthened in the region, according to Karzai, who asked for the U.S. to step up its efforts in training police. Karzai was hopeful that Pakistan would continue to cooperate with Afghanistan in curbing the Taliban, offering to help tribal elders if it did not view Afghan's assistance as interference. Karzai asked us to talk to Saudi Arabia about engaging with Pakistan. Raising Pakistani opposition leader Jamil Bugti, Karzai suggested that he be considered a refugee. END SUMMARY.

Karzai Receives Warm Welcome by Pakistan at SAARC

12. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher noted, and President Karzai agreed, that Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz of Pakistan had given Karzai a very warm welcome at the inaugural session

of the Fourteenth South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit April 3, in which Afghanistan became a member of the organization. Boucher added that we would raise the issues of land transit routes from Afghanistan and security in Pakistani-Afghan border areas.

Joint Jirga - U.S. Participation?

14. (C) Karzai was positive on a Joint Jirga session held one month ago, describing jirga members as having been "more than happy with their visit," and adding that Pashtun members on the Pakistan side were eager for the jirgas to succeed. A second set of discussions will take place soon in Kabul. Raising the possibility of foreigners taking part in the jirga, Karzai was not opposed to the idea, but the Afghan Ambassador to India, Sayed Makhdoom Raheen, disagreed, stating firmly that he thought the U.S. should not participate, but could be helpful from a distance. Karzai agreed the question should be dealt with by the jirga committees.

Poppy Eradication On the Rise in Helmand Province

15. (C) Karzai mentioned that he had been in Lashkar Gah in Helmand Province March 29, and described the situation there as "exactly like Kandahar was last Spring," remarking that the people want neither the Taliban nor a foreign power to be in control. However, the government must be stronger there. He reported that the army was very popular, and that the construction of the Kajakai dam was well-accepted by the

NEW DELHI 00001620 002.2 OF 003

locals. Eradication of poppies was on the rise in the region, he said. Asked if the governor was performing poppy eradication, Karzai stated that the central government was doing it, and the governor was helping. He maintained that the governor had stopped eradicating in some areas by orders of the British, and that there needs to be consultation between the governor and the international community on poppy eradication. He added that he had met with the British Defence Secretary recently, who observed that things had improved in Helmand Province compared to a few months ago.

More Effort Needed to Increase the Police Force

16. (C) Karzai emphasized that strengthening of the police force was imperative, lamenting that there were "many layers of decision-making" which were slowing the police down, and that the police needed to be extended beyond the Helmand capital. He exhorted the U.S. to expedite its part of the process in meeting the policing needs of the population, to which Boucher responded by describing U.S. training of auxiliary police to date, adding that more police were being trained.

Hope for Continued Effort on Pakistan's Part

17. (C) Kandahar was more stable than it had been last year, according to Karzai, adding that "with Waziristan going the way it is" there would be fewer suicide bombers coming across. "I hope our Pakistan engagement will show real progress and continuing effort on the part of Pakistan," Karzai said hopefully, noting that things would improve if Pakistan kept doing its part. The Taliban had gone beyond Waziristan to major cities in Pakistan, including Islamabad, he acknowledged, adding that the Pakistani city of Tank was under curfew. "I hope Pakistan understands that this can become a Pashtun-Punjabi problem," suggested Karzai, warning that a link between the Taliban and the Pashtuns could be established more easily than previously thought, potentially causing the disintegration of Pakistan. Boucher countered

that Musharraf had realized this last Spring, and Karzai pledged that Afghanistan would help tribal leaders if they wanted assistance, and Pakistan did not view it as an interference.

Cooperation on the Pakistan Side

¶ 8. (C) When Boucher indicated that tribal leaders had been pushing the Uzbeks out of Pakistan, Karzai assessed that the Uzbeks didn't know how to come to the Afghan side, observing that tribal leaders were not allowing the Uzbeks through. Karzai expressed that there had been some good developments and "a lot more stability in the last few days," noting that a Chechen had been captured in Ghazni four to five days ago, and an Afghan Army troop lost in Pakistan had been recovered and delivered to an Afghan post, showing that there was more

NEW DELHI 00001620 003.2 OF 003

cooperation from the population than there had been in the past. Karzai inquired whether we would encourage Saudi Arabia to engage with Pakistan.

Bugti and Baluchistan

¶ 9. (C) Raising the subject of Pakistani opposition leader Jamil Bugti, Karzai stated that those in mainstream Pakistani politics considered Bugti to be a martyr, while the Government of Pakistan considered him to be a terrorist. Regarding possible Afghan protection of Bugti, Karzai asserted, "We would have to look at how to make a deal," opining "we should see him as a refugee." Karzai suggested that Bugti be referred to the UN. "More of them will come," presaged Karzai, maintaining that political opponents of Pakistan's government should not be considered to be terrorists. Referring to the possibility of Bugti being harmed if he were sent back, Karzai predicted, "Afghanistan wouldn't recover for a long time. Especially Baluchistan."

¶ 10. (U) Assistant Secretary Boucher has cleared this message.

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